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ABSTRACT

This paper examines job development and vocational training for persons with hearing impairments in Taiwan and reports on a survey of 26 individuals just graduated or about to graduate with hearing impairment. Discussion includes an historical overview and examination of the concept of transition in Taiwan and transition to employment for people with hearing impairments. The data on the 26 students were abstracted from a 2000 study of 202 students, "Study of Career Self-concept and Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities in Taiwan" (Lin, Chen, and Lin). The Career Transition Needs Scale, adapted to the Taiwanese situation, was used. Findings indicated that most (92 percent) of the hearing impaired youth did not attend the Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) meeting and did not receive a quality transition curriculum. Most schools failed to develop ITPs for these students and also did not develop interagency cooperative efforts. Students who did not work were more likely to receive a better transition curriculum and relied more on interagency cooperation. Currently employed youth relied less on transition services offered by their school and relied more on their own abilities. Previously employed youth were most likely to request vocational guidance services. Eleven suggestions for improving transition services to this population are offered. (Contains 23 references and 4 tables.) (DB)

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1

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ABSTRACT

Youth with hearing impairments report problems entering the workforce and operating within the workplace in Taiwan. Recent studies have indicated that a substantial percentage of individuals labeled as having hearing disabilities are unemployed, live at home, and have few friends. In an attempt to assure positive transition from-school-to-work outcomes for youth with hearing impairment in Taiwan, this paper explored the problem and strategy in job development and vocational training for persons with hearing impairment in Taiwan. Also, a survey on transition from school to work with 202 youth with disabilities, including 26 individuals with hearing impairment was conducted across the island by a well-developed Career Transition Needs Scale to understand the current career related outcomes of vocational high-school students, and to identify the factors affecting career transition and career self-concept for vocational high-school students with disabilities. It is necessary that special educators, parents, and vocational professionals, continue to work with potential and current employers to identify placements that will be useful during the school years and may actually convert to full-time employment upon graduation. Recommendations are offered concerning the implications of these findings on vocational rehabilitation, job development, vocational education, transition services, and further research in Taiwan.

Keywords: Transition, Employment, Career, Hearing Impairment, Vocational Rehabilitation, Youth, Disability

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Introduction

Historical Overview and Concept of Transition in Taiwan

Concern over the transition from youth to adulthood for individuals with disabilities has gained increasing attention for the past two decades in the world. In the United States, federal laws in the fields of special education, rehabilitation, vocational-technical education, and workforce training have provided legal mandates for the provision of various vocational and transition services to individuals with disabilities. The recent legislations, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (PL 105-17), the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Educational Act Amendments of 1998 (PL 105-332), the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (PL 103-227), Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 (PL 103-227), and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (PL 105-220), etc., have all called for interdisciplinary efforts to help individuals with disabilities achieve better transition outcomes. Currently, the concept of secondary transition has evolved to include not only transition to employment, but also to comprise transition to postsecondary education, transition to adult living, transition to recreation and leisure in the community (Flexer, Simmons, Lluft, Baer, 2001; Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000).

In Taiwan, the transition of youth with disabilities from school to adult life has also become a primary concern for parents and professionals. Educational research and programming have given rise to a powerful consensus on the benefits of assisting young people with disabilities and their families during the critical transition years. Recently, with the passages of the Special Education Act of 1997 and Protection Act for Individuals with Disabilities of 1997 on Taiwan, it seems that the promise for a better transition from school to work for individuals with disabilities in Taiwan is approaching. These public laws ensure the right of education, the right of vocational rehabilitation, the right for appropriate medical services, and the right for work for people with disabilities. The Article 42 of the Protection Act for Individuals with Disabilities of 1997 stated the following:

> To connect the welfare demand of individuals with disabilities in different stages of their careers, the related departments of the governments of individual levels shall aggressively communication and coordinate with each other and make

individualized career transition plan to render the people with disabilities with complete and continuous services. (President Wha-jong (1) Yi-tzi No. 8600101190 April 26, 1997)

The Regulations of the Special Education Act also specified that:

It is ensured that students start their planning for transitional services at four respective stages: kindergarten level, grade six in the primary school, grade nine in the secondary school, and grade twelve in the high school, and the required planning is to take place at an regular meeting at their Individual Education Plan. Transition services include guidance for education, living, employment, psychological guidance, social welfare, and other related professional services. (Tai (87) Shen-tzi No. 871057266 May29, 1998)

However, as complex as this transition period would seem to be, the development of the conceptualization of transition has become more complicated than the early attempt initiated by the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) in the States. Presently, a different concept of "transition education," "career education," and "seamless transition" have emerged in an attempt to express this multidimensional and broadened connotation of transition (e.g., Brolin, 1995; Repetto & Correa, 1996; Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). In Taiwan, the same rhetoric and similar concept of transition services are also discussed (e.g., Ho, 2001; Lin 1996; 1997; 1998; 1999; 2000; Cheu & Shue, 1998; Chen, 1998). Based on the law in Taiwan, transition services are currently viewed as a coordinated set of activities including early intervention, special education, post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation, and aging caring. As for the procedure of transition was shown in Figure 1.

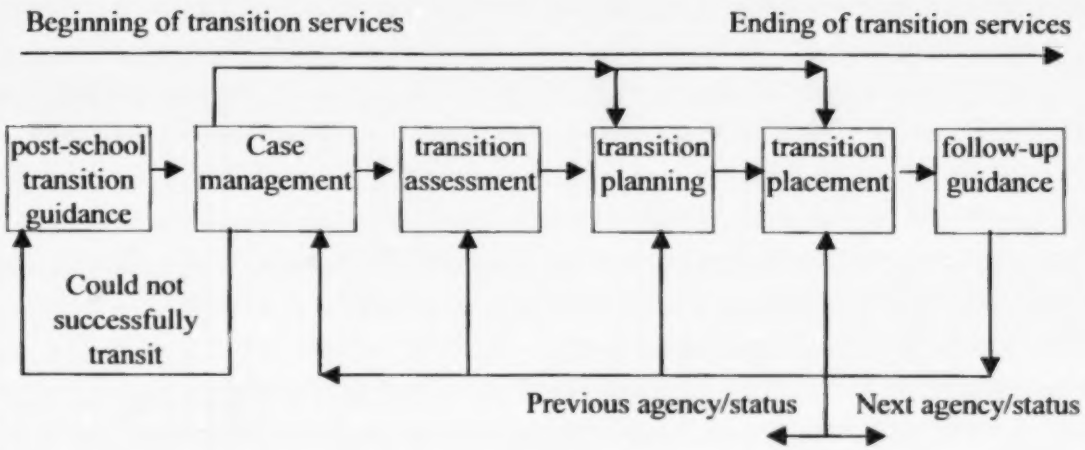

Figure 1: The Regular Procedure of Transition in Taiwan

Transition to Employment for People with Hearing Impairments

It is not unusual that individuals with disabilities do not participate in the workforce to the same extent as citizens who have no disabilities. According to a recent survey conducted by the Ministry of Interior (2000), it shows that the workforce for individuals with disabilities over age 15 is only 24.1%. That is 78.9% of people with disabilities could not be employed. Within the 24.1% workforce, 19.1% are currently employed, and 5.0% are unemployed.

Today, despite improved public awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and significant increases in the number of day programs for adults (Lin, 1996), hundreds of thousands of potentially employable individuals remain idle. Unemployment rates of 30 percent to 59 percent (Ministry of Interior the ROC, 1995; Taiwan Governmental Department of the Social Welfare, 1992; Taiwan Governmental Department of the Labor Affairs, 1996) provide a dramatic description of the current deplorable state of affairs. Table 1 provides a summary of three national studies on employment of people with disabilities in Taiwan. Many of the persons surveyed were viewed as not in the job market, owing to being discouraged about obtaining employment. However, it was notable that of the two-thirds who were unemployed, when asked if a job became available would they be interested, two out of three indicated that they would engage in employment. This extremely high level of unemployment among persons with disabilities would thus appear not to be an issue of motivation but rather of a lack of opportunity. Clearly, this problem must be addressed if employment opportunities for adults with disabilities are to expand.

Table 1: A Summary of Three National Studies on Working of Individuals with Disabilities in Taiwan

Item	Taiwan Governmental Department of the Social Welfare (1992)		Ministry of Interior of the ROC (1995)		Taiwan Governmental Department of the Labor Affairs (1996)		Average of the Employment Rates
	Employed (%)	Unemployed (%)	Employed (%)	Unemployed (%)	Employed (%)	Unemployed (%)	Employed (%)
Total	69.7	30.3	41.5	58.5	43.0	57.0	51.4
Gender							
Male	74.3	25.7	45.6	54.4	54.8	45.2	58.2
Female	59.3	40.7	34.1	65.9	43.1	56.9	45.5
Categories of Disabilities							
Visual impairments	67.9	32.1	12.3	87.7	29.1	70.9	36.4
Auditory/listening impairments	75.0	25.0	31.3	68.7	59.9	40.1	55.4
Speech/vocal impairments	57.7	42.3	36.2	63.8	47.5	52.5	47.1
Physical disabilities	71.0	29.0	63.5	36.5	60.2	39.8	64.9
Intellectual disabilities	55.0	45.0	22.1	77.9	21.6	78.4	32.9
Multiple disabilities	73.4	26.6	6.5	93.5	30.3	69.7	36.7
Illness/lose of important organs	*	*	3.0	97.0	51.3	48.7	27.2
Facial impairments	*	*	73.9	26.1	56.6	43.4	65.3
Autism	*	*	50.0	50.0	11.8	88.2	30.9
Age							
Under 20	28.7	71.3	31.9	68.1	16.9	83.1	25.8
20-29	66.0	34.0	47.2	52.8	49.0	51.0	54.1
30-39	77.5	22.5	42.2	57.8	60.5	39.5	60.1
40-49	75.7	24.3	41.3	58.7	54.5	45.5	57.2
Level of education							
Illiteracy	61.8	38.2	10.6	89.4	15.6	84.4	29.3
Primary-school Diploma	66.4	33.6	42.2	57.8	42.5	57.5	50.4
Junior High-school Diploma	70.3	29.7	50.9	49.1	46.7	53.3	55.9
Senior High-school Diploma	71.1	28.9	55.0	45.0	56.8	43.2	60.9
College/university graduate	76.6	23.4	63.1	36.9	71.7	28.3	70.5

A great deal of research shows the same results of unemployment rate for people with hearing impairments. According to Table 1, it is obvious that currently there are around 45% of individuals with hearing impairments without getting jobs. The survey findings conducted by the Taiwan Governmental Department of the Labor Affairs (1996) also show that almost 40% of all persons with hearing impairments in this country between the ages of 15 and 60 are not working. In Shue and Shues' (1994) study, they found that most of people with hearing impairments in Taiwan lack the necessary vocational skills to obtain a job close to their homes. In short, it seemed that helping people (especially youth) with hearing impairments, to find a job, to accommodate into the workplace, to maintain a job, and even to keep advancing in a job is really a priority concern both at the personal and national levels.

Thus, in an attempt to assure positive transition from-school-to-work outcomes for youth with hearing impairment in Taiwan, this paper explored the problem and strategy in job development and vocational training for persons with hearing impairment in Taiwan. Also, a survey on transition from school to work with 202 youth with disabilities (Lin, Chen, Lin, 2000), including 26 individuals with hearing impairment was conducted across the island to understand the current career related outcomes of vocational high-school students, and to identify the factors affecting transition services for vocational high-school students with hearing impairments. Recommendations are also offered concerning the implications of these findings on vocational rehabilitation, job development, vocational education, transition services, and further research in Taiwan.

Method

Subjects

The sample for this study was comprised of 26 youth with hearing impairment who just graduated or soon will graduate from high school. The sample and the data base in this study were abstracted from the Study of Career Self-Concept and Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities in Taiwan (I) conducted by Lin, Chen, and Lin (2000) in 74 special high schools or classes. In Lin's et al study, 202 high-school youth with disabilities was conducted across the state through stratified sampling based on the proportion of gender, region, severity of disability, disability category of the population of youth with disabilities in Taiwan. The 26 youth with hearing impairments could to some extent represent the population of youth with impairments in Taiwan. All of the subjects have finished the needs side of transition services in the instrumentation, while their teachers helped finish the supply side of transition services which the youth currently received.

Instrumentations

The survey instrument used in this study is the Career Transition Needs Scale (Chen, Wang, & Lin, 2000), which was drawn from a pool of data collection tools which have evolved over many years of systematic transition research and adapted to Taiwanese situation. The Career Transition Needs Scale was developed to contain empirically derived indicators of multidimensional outcomes, and has been revised to measure the major transitional post-school outcome domains. The survey tool is well developed with a total test-retest reliability of .81 and the reliability coefficients of the subscales were ranged from .41 to .86. This survey instrument consisted of 44 questions across eight subscales: (1) medical services (α=.98); (2) adult living services (α=.90); (3) working and adaptation services(α=.85); (4) psychological guidance services (α=.86); (5) personal-event services (α=.84); (6) vocational guidance services (α=.83); (7) social learning services (α=.85); (8) education guidance services (α=.75) (Chen, Wang, & Lin, 2001).

Procedure and Data Analysis

The statistical analysis was completed by using the SPSS8.01 package. The χ^2 test for ordered categorical variables, and χ^2 test of independence for unordered categorical variables (two-sided tests) were conducted to test the differences among personal, family, school, and societal variables (i.e., gender, level of age, current graduation status, current living status, region in Taiwan, employment status, severity of disabilities, vocational training attended, ITP meeting held, and social-economical status). Multiple linear regressions were used to identify factors associated with

transition service needs among the eight subscales and the total score. A stepwise selection procedure with α=0·05 as the selection criteria was applied. The potential explanatory variables included gender, level of age, current graduation status, current living status, region in Taiwan, employment status, severity of disabilities, vocational training attended, ITP meeting held, social-economical status, interagency cooperation, transition services curriculum, and development of ITP, etc. The dependent variables primarily are nine transition service needs indices, which included eight scores of the respective subscales of the Career Transition Needs Scale and the total score the scale.

RESULTS

Transition Services Status for Youth with Hearing Impairments

As shown in Table 2, there were slightly more males (57.7%) than females (42.3%) in the sample. Most of the youth (84.6%) lived with their parents. Approximately 53.8% of the youth with hearing impairments were never employed, while 30.8% currently employed and 15.4% previously employed. While 92.3% of the sample did not attend the Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) meeting, 7.7% were invited to attend ITP by their schools. Most of the youth with hearing impairments in the sample were classified as having a severe disability not because of severe mental retardation. The mean age of the sample was 19.97 years (range 17.8 to 25.1). Most of families (92.3%) of the youth with hearing impairments are with lower social-economical status.

Table 2: Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristics		N	%
Gender	Male	15	57.7
	Female	11	42.3
Level of Age	Under 19 years old	7	26.9
	19 to 20 years old	9	34.6
	Above 20 years	10	38.5
Current Graduation Status	Graduated	11	42.3
	Not Graduated	15	57.7
Current Living Status	Live with Parents	22	84.6
	Live with Other Relatives	3	11.5
	Live Alone	1	3.8
Region in Taiwan	Northern Part	7	26.9
	Middle Part	11	42.3
	Southern Part	8	30.8
Employment Status	Currently Employed	8	30.8
	Previously Employed but Not Now	4	15.4
	Never Employed	14	53.8
Severity of Disabilities	Mild	2	7.7
	Moderate	2	7.7
	severe	16	61.5
	profound	6	23.1

Vocational Training	Yes	5	19.2
	No	21	80.8
ITP Meeting Attendance	Yes	2	7.7
	No	24	92.3
Social-Economical Status	High	2	7.7
	Low	24	92.3

(N=26)

With regards to transition services offered by the schools of the youth with hearing impairments, Table 3 summarized the results of cross tables of employment status with ITP meeting attendance, transition services curriculum, development of ITP, interagency cooperation, condition of ITP, condition of interagency cooperation, and condition of transition curriculum.

In χ^2 tests, results of currently employed versus condition of interagency cooperation (χ^2=7.95, p=.005), previously employed versus transition curriculum (χ^2=10.64, p=.005), no work experience versus transition curriculum (χ^2=10.67, p=.031), and no work experience versus condition of interagency cooperation (χ^2=7.97, p=.019) are statically significant.

Table 3: Cross Tables of Work-Related Variables with Current Transition Services

		Currently Employed				Previously Employed but Not Now				Never Employed	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
		Yes		No		Yes		No			
ITP Meeting Attendance	Yes	1	3.8	1	3.8	0	0.0	2	7.7	1	3.8
	No	7	26.9	17	65.4	4	15.4	20	76.9	13	50.0
Interagency Cooperation	Good	1	3.8	13	50.0	3	11.5	11	42.3	10	38.5
	Not Good	7	26.9	5	19.2	1	3.8	11	42.3	4	15.4
Transition Curriculum	Good	8	30.8	17	65.4	3	11.5	22	84.6	14	53.8
	Not Good	0	0.0	1	3.8	1	3.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Development of ITP	Good	1	3.8	2	7.7	0	0.0	3	11.5	2	7.7
	Not Good	7	26.9	16	61.5	4	15.4	19	73.1	12	46.2

（有效樣本 26 人）

Predictability of Transition Service Needs

Nineteen potential explanatory variables with nine dependent variables were examined through stepwise multiple linear regressions to identify predictability of transition service needs for youth with hearing impairments. Table 4 summarized the results of the statistics for the different models.

In terms of the total score of transition service needs, currently employed, interagency cooperation, work experience, level of severity are the four variables that could best predicate the total transition needs with an explainable variance of 79% for youth with hearing impairments. For education guidance services, currently employed and interagency cooperation are the two variables that could best predicate the education guidance transition needs with an explainable variance of 71%. In

social learning services, interagency cooperation and previously employed are the two variables that could best predicate the social learning transition needs with an explainable variance of 61%.

For vocational guidance services, interagency cooperation and previously employed are the two variables that could best predicate the working and living transition needs with an explainable variance of 41% for youth with hearing impairments. In personal-event services, interagency cooperation and gender are the two variables that could best predicate the personal-event transition needs with an explainable variance of 68%. For psychological guidance, there are five variables, interagency cooperation, previously employed, level of severity, currently employed, and transition curriculum, which could best predicate the psychological guidance transition needs with an explainable variance of 76%.

In terms of working and adaptation services, currently employed and work experience are the two variables that could best predicate the working and living transition needs with an explainable variance of 59% for youth with hearing impairments. For adult-living services, currently employed, previously employed, transition curriculum, and urbanicity/district are the best predicators of adult living transition needs with an explainable variance of 88%. In medical services, there are only one variable of currently employed that could best predict the medical transition services with an explainable variance of 42%.

Table 4: Results of Stepwise Multiple Linear Regressions on Transition Service Needs

Model	Variables Input	R	R^2	Beta	F value
	Total Transition Service Needs				
1	Currently Employed	.72	.51	-.72	25.23***
2	Interagency Cooperation	.82	.67	-.45	23.22***
3	Work Experience	.86	.74	-.70	21.05***
4	Level of Severity	.89	.79	.23	19.82***
	Education-Guidance Transition Services				
1	Currently Employed	.76	.58	-.76	33.21***
2	Interagency Cooperation	.85	.71	-.42	28.60***
	Social-Learning Transition Services				
1	Interagency Cooperation	.72	.52	-.72	26.11***
2	Previously Employed	.78	.61	.31	18.19***
	Vocational-Guidance Transition Services				
1	Interagency Cooperation	.53	.28	-.53	9.12**
2	Previously Employed	.64	.41	.37	7.96**
	Personal-Event Transition Services				
1	Interagency Cooperation	.77	.59	-.77	34.58***
2	Gender	.83	.68	.31	24.72***
	Psychological-Guidance Transition Services				
1	Interagency Cooperation	.65	.42	-.65	17.18***
2	Previously Employed	.73	.53	.34	12.81***
3	Level of Severity	.79	.62	.32	12.02***
4	Currently Employed	.84	.70	-.34	12.42***
5	Transition Curriculum	.87	.76	-.29	12.85***

	Working and Adaptation Transition Services				
1	Currently Employed	.71	.51	-.71	24.83***
2	Employment Experience	.77	.59	-.72	16.29***
	Adult-Living Transition Services				
1	Currently Employed	.79	.62	-.79	39.75***
2	Previously Employed	.87	.76	.38	36.27***
3	Transition Curriculum	.92	.85	-.39	41.85***
4	Urbanicity/District	.94	.88	.17	37.40***
	Medical Transition Services				
1	Currently Employed	.65	.42	-.65	17.46***

**p<.01 ; ***p<.001

Discussion

Implications of the Current Transition Services Status

The data shown that most of youth with hearing impairments did not attend the ITP meeting and not receive a quality transition curriculum. Most of schools did not develop the ITPs for youth with hearing impairments and their cooperation relationship with other agencies were also poor. The data indicated that the schools did not have good interagency cooperation the youth with hearing impairments were more likely to have better employment status. For the schools that did not offer quality transition curriculum, the youth with hearing impairments tended to be unemployed. For the students with hearing impairment who never work, the school tended to offer better transition curriculum and relied more on interagency cooperation. Ironically, it seemed that the currently employed youth with hearing impairment were not dependent on the transition service offered by their school, but more on their capabilities.

Implication of the Predictability of Transition Services Needs

In terms of total transition services needs, the data suggest that youth with hearing impairments who are currently unemployed or have no work experience and under a poor school interagency cooperation tend to have a greater needs on all transition services. The more severe the hearing impairments the youth have, the more transition-service needs they tend to require during transition. In terms of educational services, the results indicate that youth with lower interest in employment and under a poor interagency cooperation are more likely to request educational guidance for advanced study. With regard to community and learning services, the data suggest youth without working experience under a poor interagency cooperation are more likely to request the needs of community and social-experience services for their transition.

The findings also suggest that previously employed youth with hearing impairments under a poor interagency cooperation are more likely to request the needs of vocational guidance services during transition. As for youth without work experience and currently unemployed, they tend to have transition service needs on working and adaptation. In terms of gender, female youth with hearing impairments

under a poor interagency cooperation tend to request personal-event guidance services for their transition. For psychological guidance services, the data suggest that youth without working experience or currently unemployed or with more severe hearing impairments under a poor interagency cooperation are more likely to request the needs of psychological guidance for their transition. In terms of adult services, the results suggest that youth without working experience or currently unemployed or lived in a more rural area and under a poor interagency cooperation are more likely to request adult services in transition. Similarly, the data also suggest that youth with hearing impairments who are not working are more likely to request medical services in transition.

Suggestions for Youth with Hearing Impairments in Transition

Based on the implications found in this study, the following are the potential key strategies of transition that could be used to make the transition from school to work effective for youth with hearing impairments in Taiwan.

1. Collaborate effectively and regularly among school, employers, training centers, and adult service providers: to plan for the future of the student as it relates to his or her interests.

2. Develop appropriate and quality transition curriculum: to prepare the student with hearing impairment for employment, independent living, recreation/leisure, or educational options before specific events.

3. Plan systematically and individually for movement of youth: to make sure what, when, where, and how is needed for the student to graduate successfully and enter the job place or the university/college, or live independently in the community.

4. Communicate regularly and effectively between school and parent/guardians: to enhance the understanding what the parents/guardians want for the student, and what skills are being worked on at school.

5. Offer work-based experience programs and community-based education: to provide effective school-to-work vocational programs, such as, field trips, job shadowing, school-based enterprise, career-related camp programs, apprenticeship and internship, work study or part-time placement, cooperative education as well career academy, and to teach the skill in the environment in which it would occur and need to survive in the community.

6. Locate available and accessible residential and leisure alternatives in the community: by using the community to explore recreation and leisure opportunities with independence.

7. Recognize available and accessible post-secondary education and training support alternatives for interpersonal daily living and occupational skills: to meet the needs and interests of the students with hearing impairments.

8. Acknowledge available and accessible employment alternatives in the community: to achieve competitive and supported employment opportunities.

9. Identify available and accessible community generic service support systems: to match the needs and interests of the youth with hearing impairments.

10. Build suitable vocational and psychological guidance programs: to help youth with hearing to understand themselves in terms of vocational interests, psychological development and life issues.

11. Develop and execute the effective and quality ITP and invite youth and their parents to attend the ITP meeting: to fulfill the legislation mandate and the dream of

youth with hearing impairment.

Conclusion

For youth with hearing impairments and their families, transition from school to adult life comparatively requires a more extensive amount of planning, knowledge, and coordination. However, there are few data that indicate that youth with hearing impairments who leave public school lead more successful lives in Taiwan. Even though in the past two decades the transition of youth with disabilities from school to adult life has become a primary concern for parents and professionals, and educational research and programming have given rise to a powerful consensus on the benefits of assisting young people with disabilities and their families during the critical transition years, recent studies on the post-school status of students with hearing impairments have been relatively few in number

It is obvious that much of the resulting federal, state, and local policy making and program development has gone on in the absence of satisfactorily empirical information on the factors affecting transition services and scope of the transition issues youth with disabilities encounter. This lack of information is especially evident in addressing the transition situation of youth with hearing impairments.

It is apparent that gaining and using knowledge regarding transition for people with disabilities will never be an easy, uncomplicated, or value-free endeavor. Such knowledge is best derived over time not only from people with disabilities and familiar others but also from service-providers and the context they lived with. What is needed is to continually accumulate and update this knowledge to reflect changes in needs and contexts. Individuals with disabilities, familiar others, and service providers should work together to identify important transition needs that can serve as a basis and context from which to plan and evaluate programs and services. Quality policies and services developed in this context should also provide options to individuals with disabilities to pursue their own transition dreams, and simultaneously respect the choice of individuals with disabilities concerning their quality of life.

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